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# THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM AT 40

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*In 1988, cyclists peer into a tunnel along the Elroy Sparta Bike Trail, a National Recreation Trail nominated in 1971. Photo: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.*

# THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM AT 40

**Prepared by the Federal Interagency Council on Trails**

**November 2008**

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*Cover: An Appalachian National Scenic Trail hiker pauses to enjoy beautiful views. Photo: Appalachian Trail Conservancy.*

*Facing page: Covered wagon at Scotts Bluff National Monument, 2006. Photo: National Park Service (NPS).*


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*Ezra Meeker stands by Chimney Rock in western Nebraska during his first re-enactment trip along the Oregon Trail in 1906. Photo: David Welch.*

*Children ride bikes opposite Washington, D.C., along the Mount Vernon Trail, a component of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail. Photo: NPS.*

*A dogsled musher greets a snowmachine operator along the Iditarod NHT in Alaska. Photo: Kevin Keeler/BLM.*

# THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM AT 40

*The National Trails System connects people to our land, our scenic wonders, our heritage, our cultures, and our communities. This diverse network of sustained and protected trails strives to provide education, foster appreciation and enjoyment, protect resources, and support enriching and inspiring experiences through partnerships, community involvement, and citizen action.*

- Partnership for the National Trails System, 2003

*Auto tour route signs along Interstate 435 in Kansas City, Missouri, June, 2008. Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.*

40 years in the making, the National Trails System is maturing into a true nationwide network of trails as the result of Federal, State, and local governmental bodies working in close partnership with thousands of enthusiastic volunteers and dozens of nonprofit organizations. Passed in 1968, the National Trails System Act has been amended many times. Volunteers have proven to be the heart and soul of the System.

Because each national trail in the National Trails System is assigned to one or more Federal agencies, this report offers a Federal interagency perspective on the state of the National Trails System in 2008.

National trails are complex. Some are long, some short. Many involve built elements such as bridges and steps, restrooms, visitor centers, markers, blazes, and highway signs. Many include a land corridor of cherished views or rare and sacred cultural sites. Some trails cross large amounts of Federal land, while others mostly involve private landowners, local park authorities, public road rights-of-way, and state and tribal reservations. These trails involve complex organizational issues: partnership agreements, fund raising, volunteers, and special events. Some are a single route, while others form complex braided networks.

*"The establishment of a nationwide system of trails will be an accomplishment worthy of a place beside other major conservation programs. . . The fundamental objective of a nationwide system of trails is to provide simple, inexpensive recreation opportunities for all people by having an abundance of trails for walking, cycling, and horseback riding near home, as well as providing some major historic and scenic interstate trails of national significance."*

*- Stewart Udall in testimony, March 6, 1967, in GPO, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation... on HR 4865 and Related Bills To Establish a Nationwide System of Trails, March 6-7, 1967, Serial No. 09-4, p. 23.*

*President Johnson signs the National Trails System Act into law on October 2, 1968. Interior Secretary Steward Udall, Lady Bird Johnson, and other high-level officials look on. Photo: LBJ Library, Austin, TX.*

This report describes the current status of America's national scenic and historic trails, as well as the other trail types created by the National Trails System Act: national recreation trails, rail-trails, and connecting and side trails. In addition, it highlights various Federal programs that assist these trails. Recommended actions are offered to address existing unmet needs and better coordinate consistency among the various agencies.

The Federal Interagency Council on Trails was chartered in 1969 to foster interagency collaboration and make recommendations to the secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture about various aspects of the National Trails System. Federal agency members of the Council have joined together to submit this report to inform our own agencies and departments about the full spectrum of current Federal involvement in the National Trails System.

Current interagency authorities and agreements that underlie this report include:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1968 | The National Trails System Act, as amended (16 USC 1241-1251) |
| 2001 | Executive Order 13195, *Trails for America in the 21st Century* |
| 2006 | *The National Trails System Memorandum of Understanding*, signed by six agencies, all participants in the Council. |

Submitted by: Steven Elkinton, National Park Service
(Chair, Federal Interagency Council on Trails)
Nathan Caldwell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Christopher Douwes, Federal Highway Administration
Deb Salt, Bureau of Land Management
Jonathan Stephens, USDA Forest Service
Peppino Persio, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

## WHAT IS THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM?

The National Trails System, authorized by the National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended (*16 United States Code* 1241-1251), includes four types of trails:

- National Scenic Trails (NSTs)
- National Historic Trails (NHTs)
- National Recreation Trails (NRTs), and
- Connecting and Side Trails.

NSTs and NHTs can only be established by Congress, while NRTs and connecting and side trail designations are formally recognized by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture.

**National Scenic Trail**s offer superlative corridors of recreation in continuous and protected corridors that cross America's diverse landforms. The first two were the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Trails. Today eight NSTs cross 29 states and total 14,600 miles in combined lengths. Of this mileage, 11,080 miles (76%) are complete and open to the public (see Appendices C and D).

**National Historic Trail**s teach history. Each follows a chain of sites and physical embodiments (ruts, grave sites, structures, and ruins) that tell the story of America's growth. They are often not continuous, and the level of historic integrity may vary from pristine to radically altered. Added to the System in 1978, there are now 18 NHTs in 32 states totaling 32,400 miles in designated routes. Related statistics include almost 20,500 miles of auto tour route, 2,935 miles of re-tracement trail, 1,933 high potential sites and segments, and over 120 visitor centers (see Appendices C and D).

*NPS trails staffer Kay Threlkeld takes notes along the routes of four overlapping historic trails at the headwaters of the Sweetwater River in central Wyoming. Photo: NPS.*

*Volunteers work on the Herman Gulch Trail in Colorado, a 2005 National Trails Day project. Photo: Continental Divide Trail Alliance.*

*Below left: A youth crew from Ossining, NY, works to relocate the Appalachian NST on Bear Mountain in Harriman State Park. Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.*

*Below right: Ross Marshall, President of the Partnership for the National Trails System, stands by a wayside exhibit along the Oregon Trail in Independence, Missouri, 2008. Photo: Steven Elkinton/ NPS.*

**National Recreation Trails** are usually local in nature — although a few stretch longer than 100 miles. They are found in every state and Puerto Rico. Each year the secretary of the Interior, upon application, recognizes several dozen NRTs. The Secretary of Agriculture oversees recognition of NRTs within the National Forest System. Currently there are 1,055 NRTs totaling over 19,000 miles. They can be single-use or multi-use, paved or natural surfaced, on water or land, urban or rural, motorized or non-motorized. (A summary of Federally-managed NRTs is found in Appendix E.)

As for **connecting and side trails**, secretarial action has officially registered two, both finalized in 1990. The 86-mile Anvik Connector is in Alaska, while the 14-mile Timm's Hill Trail is found in northern Wisconsin.

**Rail-trails** are also authorized by the National Trails System Act which enables the Surface Transportation Board to preserve abandoned railroad rights-of-way for use as recreation trails on an interim basis. The resulting "rail-to-trails" movement, launched first in the United States and now found worldwide, has preserved over 15,000 miles of former railroad corridors as recreational trails.

**Trail administration** is a trailwide function that includes interagency consultation, coordination, planning, compliance, and graphics and logos. Appendices B and F show each of the 26 NSTs' and NHTs' administering agencies, as well as significant partner organizations.

**Trail management** refers to on-the-ground responsibilities involved with maintenance, signage, visitor services and safety, permits, resource management and monitoring, area planning, volunteer coordination, and local promotion. Many Federal agencies are involved in the management of specific trail sites and segments. (Appendix D outlines the Federal management jurisdictions for each of the 26 NSTs and NHTs.)

## CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESSES

*"That view, or that viewshed or that cultural landscape or historic landscape — it is part of the important experience . . . for a user or a visitor, to those places. And in the case of historic trails, it evokes some sense of place that can be very powerful. . . It is a thrill, and it sometimes makes you shiver a bit because of the experience that you've been able to have a hundred years later."*

*- Dr. Jere Krakow*
*retired NPS, oral history interview, 2008, p. 17*

*Dr. Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, gives the Stand Up Taller Award to Eleanor Craig and Heather Rasmussen from Accessible Arts in Kansas City, Kansas, for the Discovery Trails program introducing visually impaired students to America's historic trails. First Lady Laura Bush oversees the White House ceremony, January 28, 2008. Photo: President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.*

Since its inception 40 years ago, the National Trails System has blossomed from two trails of 4,700 miles in combined lengths to 26 trails that total over 46,000 miles. Over the years, a variety of Federal agencies have joined with the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management to administer and manage these trails.

The *National Trails System Annual Report for 2007*, issued by the Federal Interagency Council on Trails, offered a snapshot of the current status of the 26 national scenic and historic trails and how far they have progressed since 1968.

| | |
|---|---|
| Administrative budget for 26 trails | $11.5 million |
| Total length of NSTs open to the public | 11,080 miles |
| Total length of NSTs still to be built | ~ 5,000 miles |
| Total length of NHTs open to the public | 2,935 miles |
| Total length of NHT auto tour routes | ~ 20,500 miles |

Many of the trail offices have extensive data systems, GIS mapping services, and websites. Each trail also is a complex web of citizen partnerships held together by a common motivation to preserve, protect, and make available to the public these outstanding trail resources. As trails have been established, people have organized to support them (see Appendix F).

*Florida Trail Association staff and volunteers join NPS Director Fran Mainella in 2006 along the Florida NST. Photo: Florida Trail Association.*

*"The [trail manager] is actually someone, a private landowner, a state government employee, a federal agency employee, or office that has trail on lands that they own or manage. Administration done by the National Park Service [or BLM, or FS] for a historic trail is really coordinating with all these many ownerships and managements the protection and preservation of the trail resources and the telling of the story, what we call interpretation of the trail, to the public through a variety of means."*

*- Dr. Jere Krakow, retired NPS, oral history interview, 2008, p. 8*

Many innovations occur along these trails — they are veritable laboratories of creative partnerships. In fiscal years 2007 and 2008, a sampling of such projects and programs included:

- The $837,000 Connect Trails to Parks program funding 14 projects where national trails intersect with national park areas.
- A petroglyph recording project along the Ala Kahakai NHT.
- The Appalachian Trail Mega-Transect as a north-south diagnostic tool to understand North American natural resource dynamics.
- The web-based John Smith Landscape Visualization project with Pennsylvania State University and the Smithsonian Institution to explore the 17th Century environment of the Chesapeake Bay.
- Florida Trail Association's Gateway Communities Program to promote close-to-home ecotourism throughout Florida.
- A partnership with Mexico's Instituto de Antropologia y Historia (INAH)-Sonora and the Sonora Office of Tourism to establish the Juan Bautista de Anza NHT across Sonora province.
- A new Urban Identity Strip to showcase the North Country NST in towns and villages.
- A new marketing alliance for the Potomac Heritage NST formed at a conference entitled "Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities Adjacent to Public Lands."

Such projects strengthen and extend a network of projects that will increasingly show Americans how valuable these trails are to the Nation as a whole and to individual communities in response to each area's unique conditions.

Projects like these are compelling examples that illuminate the rich educational, conservation, recreational, and heritage values of the National Trails System to communities and individuals.

## THE BENEFITS OF THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

*The boss is on the Blackberry, the kids text you 24/7, and your cell phone has begun to sound like a chain saw. Want to get away from it all? The National Trails System provides the perfect escape. Trails provide linear routes for regular physical activity and encourage more passive interests in nature study and personal renewal. Rediscovering history can also give focus and connect people to their genealogical and cultural roots.*

*Retreat. Renew. Refresh.*

A trail is more than just a path in the wilderness. It is a gateway to knowledge, friendships, and civic engagement. Trails can also be integral parts of transportation systems that get people moving and allow them to discover more than they might otherwise about the lands and waters around them.

A memorable trail experience is like a book, unfolding chapter by chapter. Trails can be educational tools as well as gateways to and between communities. Trails are physical objects that must be planned and maintained. They are often magnets for creative partnerships and volunteer labor. At their best they promote cross-cultural understanding and even healing of the human spirit.

In July 2004, the American Recreation Coalition stated in a letter to Congress that

> *. . . trails are an essential element in addressing this major threat [obesity] to our Nation's health. [Easily] accessible recreational trails can help prevent the estimated 400,000 premature deaths each year and annual medical costs now in excess of $100 billion attributed to obesity.*

Trails attract volunteers. For example in 2007, volunteers serving each of the NSTs and NHTs offered more than 720,000 hours valued at $13.5 million (plus an additional $8 million in financial contributions). These sums more than match Federal agency costs for trail administration.

The National Trails System is now embedded in the American landscape, touching or crossing all but a few states. Its benefits are broad and include:

- heritage education
- rigorous physical challenges
- new money for trail-related communities
- access to Federal funding programs
- community enhancement
- regional coordination for conservation and recreation
- and, perhaps most profoundly of all, the nurturing of conservation and heritage values for young and old alike.

*On a hike sponsored by the Florida Trail Association, kids explore the Big Cypress National Preserve in southern Florida. Photo: Florida Trail Association.*

# Land-Managing Agencies

**Bureau of Land Management**

The BLM manages 262 million acres (almost 12% of the continental U.S.). These lands are preserved for public purposes under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and administered within 237 resource districts — mostly in the 12 western states. In 2007, BLM recorded almost 70 million recreation visits. BLM lands directly account for some $50 billion in economic benefits to nearby towns, counties, and states. Under BLM's National Landscape Conservation System, almost 6,000 miles of national scenic and historic trails are officially recognized as management components. BLM administers one NHT and co-administers two others with NPS.

**Forest Service**

The USDA Forest Service manages 193 million acres nationwide. Its primary mission is to "sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." Authorized in 1905, the Forest Service today operates 155 forests, 20 grasslands, and six national monuments, recording 205 million recreation visits in 2007. The Forest Service has the largest network of trails of any land-managing agency in the United States (perhaps the world) totaling over 143,000 miles. The vast majority of these are natural surfaced backcountry trails in the West and open to both hikers and pack stock. Not only does the Forest Service manage almost 6,600 miles of national scenic and historic trails, it provides administration for four of the national scenic and historic trails.

**National Park Service**

NPS preserves and protects over 390 national park areas that total almost 85 million acres. The agency was established in 1916 and today hosts over 276 million recreation visits each year. More than 18,000 miles of trails of all types occur in national park areas — about 10% of that mileage is also part of the National Trails System. In addition, NPS administers or co-administers 21 of the national scenic and historic trails.

US Army Corps
of Engineers®

**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is a Department of Defense agency and plays a leadership role in the development, management, protection, and restoration of the Nation's water resources and is the steward of the lands and waters at its water resources projects. Under its Natural Resources Management mission, the USACE manages and conserves those natural resources, consistent with ecosystem management principles, while providing quality public outdoor recreation experiences to serve the needs of present and future generations. USACE is involved in trail activities in two areas: water trails (such as the routes of the Lewis and Clark NHT along the Missouri and Columbia Rivers) and NRTs associated with many of the dams and reservoirs under its jurisdiction.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**
The Service is responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. This occurs in 570 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System, 69 fish hatcheries, and 46 administrative sites totaling over 96 million acres. More than 40 million visits were recorded in 2007. The Service manages and maintains over 2,500 miles of trail and 65 foot bridges. Of these trails, 1,400 miles are foot trails used by some 7.5 million visitors a year, while 6 million more explore over 1,000 miles of water trails. Sixty of these trails (totaling 340 miles) are recognized as National Recreation Trails. Visitation to the refuges where these trails are located is expected to reach 50 million people in 2009 (with over 25% of these visitors using the trails).

## Trail Assistance Programs

U.S. Department of Transportation
**Federal Highway Administration**

**Federal Highway Administration**
The FHWA funds trail projects under a number of programs, such as the Transportation Enhancement Activities (TE) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Generally, these funds are distributed to States by formula and projects are selected and funded by State officials. Together since 1991, TE and RTP have provided the largest investment in trail projects by any national government on record.

TE funds are available for several kinds of projects related to transportation that have benefited communities nationwide through the rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities, renovated streetscapes, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, rail-trails and other transportation trails, transportation museums, and scenic and historic highway visitor centers.

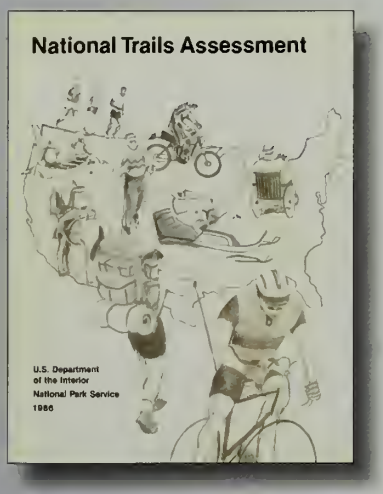
*"Together is how we got things accomplished. It wasn't me as a superintendent or staff member. It wasn't the staff that I was responsible for. But it was all of us together doing it."*
*- Dr. Jere Krakow, retired NPS, oral history interview, 2008, p. 51*

The RTP derives its revenue from the Federal excise tax on fuel used by off-highway vehicles. These funds are made available to states, by formula, to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. Half of the funds are distributed equally among all States, and half are distributed in proportion to the estimated amount of non-highway recreational fuel use in each State.

In addition to RTP and TE, the FHWA's National Scenic Byways Program promotes the recognition and enjoyment of America's memorable roads and also provides funding for scenic byway projects. Many of these roads lie along or near NSTs, NHTs, and NRTs.

**National Park Service's RTCA Program**
The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) provides staff consultations at no charge to local organizations, local units of government, nonprofit groups, state agencies, and others to develop river, trail, and open space preservation projects. In 2008, RTCA helped with 200 trail projects nationwide. Of these, 15 related directly to NST and NHT corridors. In recent years, this program has helped produce over 1,300 miles of new trail per year (as measured five years later). The RTCA program also reviews all applications coming to the Secretary of the Interior for consideration each year as National Recreation Trails.

# THE OBSTACLES TO FULL PERFORMANCE




*Cover of the 1986* National Trails Assesssment. *Photo: NPS.*

The National Trails Assessment of 1986 examined the creation process for Federal and State trails, identified key issues, and detailed then-current user needs. Although the System's statistics have changed in the intervening 22 years, the basic issues and obstacles that trail users and partners face are generally the same today as they were in 1986. These include:

- inadequate funding
- interagency coordination complexities
- the need for strong volunteer involvement
- often weak support by states and local communities
- fragmented data systems
- inadequate information for users
- opposition by affected private landowners
- poor planning practices, and
- inconsistent regulations.

From a Federal agency perspective, this list can be updated to include, in rough priority by degree of importance, the following impediments to full performance in carrying out the intentions of the National Trails System Act:

- cumbersome interagency coordination, especially at the policy level
- lack of standards and commonly agreed-upon best practices
- dispersal of staff over wide areas
- inconsistencies in volunteer management and project funding programs from one agency to another
- lack of skill development (through training and mentoring)
- shrinking memberships of partner organizations
- inability to provide substantive public relations services, especially in reaching out to local communities
- lack of connections to other agency programs that should be more fully involved in the National Trails System.

Some of the recommendations that follow address these concerns.

*BLM and NPS staff gather at Parting of the Ways in Wyoming where the California and Oregon NHTs split going West. Photo: NPS.*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*"Above and beyond the history and landscapes that these trails celebrate, what fascinates me is how these trails came to be protected today. Almost none of them would have ever been built or would still exist without passionate people of vision, often private citizens. Volunteers are the life-blood of national trails."*

- *Glenn Scherer, 2002,* America's National Trails: Journeys Across Land and Time, *p. v.*

*Hikers explore Eaton Creek bridge and boardwalk in the Ocala National Forest. Photo: Sandra Friend/Florida Trail Association.*

The 40th anniversary of the National Trails System Act, commemorated on October 2, 2008, creates an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of the National Trails System and to consider the next steps in making this System even better.

The Partnership for the National Trails System, a nonprofit coalition of 29 organizations that support the various NSTs and NHTs, has spearheaded a plan for "A Decade for the National Trails System" 2008-2018. During this decade, the citizen groups and government agencies who serve as partners in implementing this nationwide trails system can sign onto three major goals:

- Increase public awareness so that every citizen and community in the U.S. is aware of the National Trails System and its components.
- Complete and enhance all NSTs and NHTs for public appreciation and enjoyment. For NSTs, this means creating a protected corridor from end to end. For NHTs it means protecting all listed high potential sites and segments associated with the trail.
- Build the capacity of both nonprofit trail organizations and State and Federal trail offices.

## Opportunities and Challenges

The components of the National Trails System (NSTs, NHTs, and NRTs) are now increasingly well known and respected throughout the United States. They offer a tremendous opportunity to link the Nation together through nature and history, through shared heritage, and by encouraging discovery. At the same time, many of them are not well supported, are hard to discern in the landscape, and need a fair investment to make them visible and enjoyable. Fears of property rights takings and inappropriate access sometimes discourage local projects. Agencies with this responsibility have to balance it with other competing interests.

The suggestions below aim to encourage discussion and actions which will strengthen America's National Trails System and foster its development into a world class system.

- **Foster Volunteerism**

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the National Trails System. Without a corps of committed citizen volunteers willing to organize around, labor for, and become political advocates for each trail, these trails will eventually exist only on paper. Both the nonprofit trail organizations and the State and Federal agencies that support components of the National Trails System need to do all they can to foster the full range of volunteer involvement encouraged in the National Trails System Act.

*". . . trails are America's colorful link with its historic past, and . . . the walking for pleasure boom facing the nation has developed into a demand for trails that retrace historic pathways of our founding fathers.[2]"*

*- Proceedings: National Symposium on Trails, Washington D.C., June 2-6, 1971, p. 6.*

### ▪ Conduct Research

In general, trail offices and partners have not had the funds to carry out much-needed research. A 1979 Yale University Symposium identified resource management and protection, economic impacts and benefits, and organizational development as trail issues that would benefit from sound, scientific study. Little has been done since. Currently, the research that does occur is too narrowly focused to be of systemic benefit. Ideally, a national summit could be held sometime during A Decade for the National Trails on "Science and Trails" to identify top-priority research needs, opportunities, and interested parties and funders to carry out such research.

### ▪ Define Uniform Data Standards

The emergence of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and the related Global Positioning System (GPS) technologies have made possible the precise mapping of the National Trails System. The Interagency Trail Data Standards (ITDS) are the first attempt at linking and sharing this critical information among key federal agencies. However, funds will be needed to upgrade existing data sets and mapping services — as well as to bring trail data systems on-line that do not yet exist.

### ▪ Build New Partnerships

Many partners already support the components of the National Trails System — and the System as a whole. However, we must engage additional partners who may want to help enhance the National Trails System. In the future, expanded trail partnerships could easily include schools and universities, state tourism councils, civic organizations, civilian arms of the military (such as local units of the National Guard), the real estate industry, outdoor writers, and the national network of charitable foundations.

*The St. Charles Men, as Lewis & Clark re-enactors, approach the shore at St. Charles, Missouri, returning from their three-year voyage. September, 2006. Photo: Steven Elkinton/NPS.*

### ▪ Establish a Federal Lands Trails Program

Federal surface transportation has financed numerous trail-related projects since 1991. FHWA programs have provided billions of dollars to such projects, greatly enhancing many national trails. Using the Federal Lands Highways Program as a model, a fund should be created specifically for trails on public lands, the "Federal Lands Trails Program," to assure long-term multi-year funding for trails of all types on Federal lands, or administered by Federal agencies on public lands.

### ▪ Open a National Trails Resource Center

Because three Federal agencies share the administration of the National Trails System, its identity and focus is fragmented. The American public, international guests, and state and local governments all struggle to find a central source of information about the Trails System. Similarly, functions that might be centralized in other systems — such as training, promotion, and standards setting — are now dispersed. A National Trails Resource Center, modeled on America's Byways Resource Center in Duluth, Minnesota, could foster consistency throughout the National Trails System. Funded either through a stand-alone budget line-item or by a commitment by each of the contributing agencies (not unlike the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho), staff at such an interagency central information center would ensure that the National Trails System reaches its 100th birthday in 2068 unexcelled worldwide.

# CONCLUSION

*"[Trails] promise the best opportunity yet devised for bringing people into intimate contact with nature and the unspoiled out-of-doors in both wildernesses and also in the relatively developed settings . . . Trails are the most important, the most economical, and the easiest means of providing desirable human access to areas of historic significance, our publicly owned wilderness lands, and areas of scenic beauty.[3]"*

*- Stewart W. Brandborg, Executive Director, The Wilderness Society, GPO, 1967, Hearing Before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation. . . on H.R. 4865 and Related Bills to Establish a Nationwide System of Trails, held March 6-7, 1967, p. 147.*

The National Trails System has matured in many ways since 1968 (especially since the 1986 report on Federal trail activities). There are many more trails at the national, state, regional, and local levels. Trail use has mushroomed as traditional uses — such as hiking and backpacking — have grown and other modes of recreation — such as mountain bikes and inline skates — have become popular. In many parts of America, trails are becoming a key factor in community quality of life by fostering health and fitness, strengthening non-motorized transportation systems, and opening up opportunities for heritage education.

The components of the National Trails System exist within the context of the Nation's broader network of trails of all types. The challenges and opportunities associated with the National Trails System are the same as those — just on a larger scale — at the local, regional, and State levels. Together, these tiered systems of trails can be linked together into one of the finest trail systems in the world.

Such coordinated actions will transform these trails into a system that Americans truly understand and use. After all, this nationwide system of trails does not merely represent the unique natural landscapes and cultural heritage of our history. It has now become part of many Americans' way of life. It is the right of each citizen to know of this heritage nationwide and participate in its preservation and use.

*Smith's Island Nature Trail NRT in Scott County, Iowa, is suitably marked to guide visitors to this gem along the floodplain of the Mississippi River. Photo: Cherri Espersen/NPS.*

## APPENDIX A

## THE WHITE HOUSE EXECUTIVE ORDER #13195

## *TRAILS FOR AMERICA IN THE 21ST CENTURY*

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in furtherance of purposes of the National Trails System Act of 1968, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1241-1251), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (Public Law 105-178), and other pertinent statutes, and to achieve the common goal of better establishing and operating America's national system of trails, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1. Federal Agency Duties.**
Federal agencies will, to the extent permitted by law and where practicable — and in cooperation with Tribes, States, local governments, and interested citizen groups — protect, connect, promote, and assist trails of all types throughout the United States. This will be accomplished by:

(a) Providing trail opportunities of all types, with minimum adverse impacts and maximum benefits for natural, cultural, and community resources;

(b) Protecting the trail corridors associated with national scenic trails and the high priority potential sites and segments of national historic trails to the degrees necessary to ensure that the values for which each trail was established remain intact;

(c) Coordinating maps and data for the components of the national trails system and Millennium Trails network to ensure that these trails are connected into a national system and that they benefit from appropriate national programs;

(d) Promoting and registering National Recreation Trails, as authorized in the National Trails System Act, by incorporating where possible the commitments and partners active with Millennium Trails;

(e) Participating in a National Trails Day the first Saturday of June each year, coordinating Federal events with the National Trails Day's sponsoring organization, the American Hiking Society;

(f) Familiarizing Federal agencies that are active in tourism and travel with the components of a national system of trails and the Millennium Trails network and including information about them in Federal promotional and outreach programs;

(g) Fostering volunteer programs and opportunities to engage volunteers in all aspects of trail planning, development, maintenance, management, and education as outlined in 16 U.S.C. 1250;

(h) Encouraging participation of qualified youth conservation or service corps, as outlined in 41 U.S.C. 12572 and 42 U.S.C. 12656, to perform construction and maintenance of trails and trail-related projects, as encouraged in sections 1108(g) and 1112(e) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, and also in trail planning protection, operations, and education;

(i) Promoting trails for safe transportation and recreation within communities;

(j) Providing and promoting a wide variety of trail opportunities and experiences for people of all ages and abilities;

(k) Providing historical interpretation of trails and trail sites and enhancing cultural and heritage tourism through special events, artworks, and programs; and

(l) Providing training and information services to provide high-quality information and training opportunities to Federal employees, Tribal, State, and local government agencies, and the other trail partners.

## Section 2. The Federal Interagency Council on Trails.

The Federal Interagency Council on Trails (Council), first established by agreement between the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior in 1969, is hereby recognized as a long-standing interagency working group. Its core members represent the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land of Management and National Park Service, the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, and the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. Other Federal agencies, such as those representing cultural and heritage interests, are welcome to join this council. Leadership of the Council may rotate among its members as decided among themselves at the start of each fiscal year. The Council's mission is to coordinate information and program decisions, as well as policy recommendations, among all appropriate Federal agencies (in consultation with appropriate nonprofit organizations) to foster the development of America's trails through the following means:

(a) Enhancing federally designated trails of all types (e.g., scenic, historic, recreation, and Millennium) and working to integrate these trails into a fully connected national system;

(b) Coordinating mapping, signs and markers, historical and cultural interpretations, public information, training, and developing plans and recommendations for a national trails registry and database;

(c) Ensuring that trail issues are integrated in Federal agency programs and that technology transfer and education programs are coordinated at the national level; and

(d) Developing a memorandum of understanding among the agencies to encourage long-term interagency coordination and cooperation to further the spirit and intent of the National Trails System Act and related programs.

## Section 3. Issue Resolution and Handbook for Federal Administrators of the National Trails System.

Federal agencies shall together develop a process for resolving interagency issues concerning trails. In addition, reflecting the authorities of the National Trails System Act, participating agencies shall coordinate preparation of (and updates for) an operating handbook for Federal administrators of the National Trails System and others involved in creating a national system of trails. The handbook shall reflect each agencies' governing policies and provide guidance to each agencies' field staff and partners about the roles and responsibilities needed to make each trail in the national system fully operational.

## Section 4. Observance of Existing Laws.

Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to override existing laws, including those that protect the lands, waters, wildlife habitats, wilderness areas, and cultural values of this Nation.

## Section 5. Judicial Review.

This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch. It does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable in law or equity by any party against the United States, its agencies, its officers or employees, or any other person.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON
THE WHITE HOUSE, January 18, 2001

# APPENDIX B
# NST AND NHT ADMINISTRATION

| Trail | Year Established | Administering Agency | Office Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ala Kahakai NHT | 2000 | NPS | Kailua Kona, HI |
| Appalachian NST | 1968 | NPS | Harpers Ferry, WV |
| California NHT | 1992 | NPS | Salt Lake City, UT |
| Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT | 2006 | NPS | Annapolis, MD |
| Continental Divide NST | 1978 | FS | Golden, CO |
| El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT | 2004 | NPS | Santa Fe, NM |
| El Cam. Real de Tierra Adentro NHT | 2000 | NPS & BLM | Santa Fe, NM |
| Florida NST | 1983 | FS | Tallahassee, FL |
| Ice Age NST | 1980 | NPS | Madison, WI |
| Iditarod NHT | 1978 | BLM | Anchorage, AK |
| Juan Bautista de Anza NHT | 1990 | NPS | Oakland, CA |
| Lewis and Clark NHT | 1978 | NPS | Omaha, NE |
| Mormon Pioneer NHT | 1978 | NPS | Salt Lake City, UT |
| Natchez Trace NST | 1983 | NPS | Tupelo, MS |
| Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT | 1986 | FS | Orofino, ID |
| North Country NST | 1980 | NPS | Madison, WI |
| Old Spanish NHT | 2002 | NPS & BLM | Santa Fe, NM |
| Oregon NHT | 1978 | NPS | Salt Lake City, UT |
| Overmountain Victory NHT | 1980 | NPS | Blacksburg, SC |
| Pacific Crest NST | 1968 | FS | Vallejo, CA |
| Pony Express NHT | 1992 | NPS | Salt Lake City, UT |
| Potomac Heritage NST | 1983 | NPS | Harpers Ferry, WV |
| Santa Fe NHT | 1987 | NPS | Santa Fe, NM |
| Selma to Montgomery NHT | 1996 | NPS | Hayneville, AL |
| Star Spangled Banner NHT | 2008 | NPS | Annapolis, MD |
| Trail of Tears NHT | 1987 | NPS | Santa Fe, NM |

**Legend:**

| | |
|---|---|
| BLM | Bureau of Land Management |
| FS | Forest Service |
| NPS | National Park Service |
| NHT | National Historic Trail |
| NST | National Scenic Trail |

# APPENDIX C
# NST AND NHT CORRIDOR LENGTHS
(in miles)

| | Designated Length | Length open for public use |
|---|---|---|
| **National Scenic Trails** | | |
| North Country NST | 3,200 (really 4,100) | 1,828 |
| Continental Divide NST | 3,200 | 2,057 |
| Pacific Crest NST | 2,600 | 2,650 |
| Appalachian NST | 2,110 | 2,175 |
| Florida NST | 1,300 | 1,165 |
| Ice Age NST | 1,000 | 620 |
| Potomac Heritage NST | 700 | 520 |
| Natchez Trace NST | 485 | 65 |
| **Total** | **14,595 (really 15,500)** | **11,080** |

| | Designated Length | Length of auto tour route open for public use* |
|---|---|---|
| **National Historic Trails** | | |
| California NHT | 5,665 | 5,839 |
| Lewis & Clark NHT | 3,700 | ~ 6,000 |
| Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT | 3,000 | n/a |
| Old Spanish NHT | 2,700 | n/a |
| El Camino Real de los Tejas NHT | 2,600 | n/a |
| Iditarod NHT | 2,350 | n/a |
| Trail of Tears NHT | | ~ 825 |
| Oregon NHT | 2,170 | 2,130 |
| Pony Express NHT | 1,966 | 2,005 |
| Mormon Pioneer NHT | 1,300 | 1,425 |
| Juan Bautista de Anza NHT | 1,200 | 865 |
| Santa Fe NHT | 1,200 | ~ 1,000 |
| Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) NHT | 1,170 | n/a |
| El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro NHT | 404 | n/a |
| Star Spangled Banner NHT | 290 | n/a |
| Overmountain Victory NHT | 270 | 313 |
| Ala Kahakai NHT | 175 | n/a |
| Selma to Montgomery NHT | 54 | 54 |
| **Total** | **30,214** | **~ 20,456** |

* Note: NHT auto tour routes may be longer than the designated route due to braiding, parallel roads, and urban street patterns.

# APPENDIX D
# NST AND NHT ON-THE-GROUND MANAGEMENT, BY AGENCY (in miles)

| | FS | BLM | NPS | Other Fed.[1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **National Scenic Trails** | | | | |
| Appalachian NST | 804 | -- | 351 | -- |
| Continental Divide NST | 1,887 | 377 | 192 | -- |
| Florida NST | 155 | -- | 90 | 325 |
| Ice Age NST | 60 | -- | -- | -- |
| Natchez Trace NST | -- | -- | 65 | -- |
| North Country NST | 300 | -- | 45 | 75 |
| Pacific Crest NST | 2,118 | 231 | 249 | -- |
| Potomac Heritage NST | -- | -- | ~ 200 | -- |
| **NST Subtotal** | **5,324** | **608** | **1,192** | **400** |
| | | | | |
| **National Historic Trails** | | | | |
| Ala Kahakai NHT | -- | -- | 30 | 7 |
| California NHT | 486 | 1,391 | -- | 151 |
| Captain John Smith Chesapeake NHT | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| El Camino Real/Tejas NHT (n/a) | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| El Camino Real/Adentro NHT | 11 | 60 | -- | 90 |
| Iditarod NHT | 38 | 418 | -- | 407 |
| Juan Bautista de Anza NHT | 8 | 116 | -- | 88 |
| Lewis and Clark NHT | 300 | 369 | -- | 2,800[2] |
| Mormon Pioneer NHT | -- | 264 | -- | 214 |
| Nez Perce NHT | 234 | 70 | 86 | -- |
| Old Spanish NHT | -- | 887 | -- | -- |
| Oregon NHT[3] | 37 | 656 | -- | 7 |
| Overmountain Victory NHT | 10 | -- | -- | 2 |
| Pony Express NHT | 75 | 697 | -- | 16 |
| Santa Fe NHT | 3 | -- | 1 | -- |
| Selma to Montgomery NHT | -- | -- | -- | -- |
| Trail of Tears NHT | 77 | -- | -- | 1,226[2] |
| **NHT Subtotal** | **1,279** | **4,928** | **117** | **5,008** |
| | | | | |
| **Grand Totals** | **6,603** | **5,536** | **1,309** | **5,408** |

Notes:

[1] Some of these figures also include Indian reservation lands.

[2] Most of this mileage occurs in rivers under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

[3] High potential segments only.

## APPENDIX E NATIONAL RECREATION TRAILS ON FEDERAL LANDS
(combined lengths in miles)

National Recreation Trails have been designated by the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture since 1971. Today, over 1,050 trails have been so recognized in all 50 states and some U.S. territories. (States not listed have no NRTs on Federal lands or waters.) *Source: NRT Database c/o American Trails website.*

| State | Forest Service | NPS | BLM | USFWS | USACE | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alabama | 116 | | | | | |
| Alaska | 65 | 7 | 31 | 112 | | |
| Arizona | 267 | 34 | 1 | 6 | | |
| Arkansas | 365 | 1 | | | 33 | |
| California | 480 | 58 | 95 | 1 | | |
| Colorado | 167 | 3 | | 13 | | |
| Dist. of Columbia | | 20 | | | | |
| Florida | | 107 | | 1 | | 18 |
| Georgia | 83 | 15 | | 104 | 1 | |
| Hawaii | | 36 | | | | |
| Idaho | 405 | 22 | 9 | | | |
| Illinois | 2 | | | | 13 | |
| Indiana | 16 | 1 | | | | |
| Iowa | | 3 | | | 14 | |
| Kansas | | | | | 50 | 30 |
| Kentucky | 303 | | | | 4 | 70 |
| Louisiana | 32 | | | 5 | | |
| Maine | | 8 | | 1 | | |
| Massachusetts | | 9 | | | 9 | |
| Michigan | 125 | 12 | | 14 | | |
| Minnesota | 248 | | | 3 | | |
| Mississippi | 109 | | | 3 | 8 | |
| Missouri | 51 | | | 1 | 10 | |
| Montana | 526 | 65 | 39 | 3 | | |
| Nebraska | 6 | | | 6 | | |
| Nevada | 120 | 10 | 1 | | | |
| New Hampshire | 6 | | | 1 | | |
| New Mexico | 130 | 44 | 24 | | | |
| New York | 12 | 8 | | | | |
| North Carolina | 153 | 3 | | 1 | 16 | |
| North Dakota | 96 | | | 23 | | |
| Ohio | | 3 | | 9 | 2 | |
| Oklahoma | 224 | | | 11 | 36 | |
| Oregon | 639 | | 33 | 3 | | |
| Pennsylvania | 1 | 5 | | 3 | 4 | |
| Puerto Rico | 8 | | | | | |
| South Carolina | 43 | 17 | | | | |
| South Dakota | 122 | 1 | | 1 | 9 | |
| Tennessee | 24 | 6 | | 1 | 37 | 49 |
| Texas | 148 | | | 4 | 36 | |
| Utah | 87 | | 28 | 1 | | |
| Vermont | 55 | | | | | |
| Virginia | 171 | 32 | | | | |
| Washington | 208 | 260 | | 9 | 16 | |
| West Virginia | 1 | | | | 10 | |
| Wisconsin | 81 | | | | | |
| Wyoming | 124 | 11 | 2 | | | |
| **TOTALS** | **5,819** | **801** | **263** | **340** | **308** | **167** |

# APPENDIX F
# ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

| Trail Groups | Associated Trail(s) | Year Trail Est'd | Year Group Est'd | Current Membership Size | Volunteer hours contributed in 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Appalachian Trail Conservancy | Appalachian NST | 1968 | 1925 | 35,000 | 196,620 |
| Pacific Crest Trail Association | Pacific Crest NST | 1968 | 1977 | 6,850 | 62,520 |
| | | | | | |
| Continental Divide Trail Alliance | Continental Divide NST | 1978 | 1995 | 3,000 | 37,490 |
| Continental Divide Trail Society | Continental Divide NST | 1978 | 1978 | 250 | 1,500 |
| Iditarod Historic Trail Alliance | Iditarod NHT | 1978 | 2000 | n/a | 1,900 |
| Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Fdtn. | Lewis & Clark NHT | 1978 | 1969 | 3,500 | 24,040 |
| Mormon Trails Association | Mormon Pioneer NHT | 1978 | n/a | n/a | 3,160 |
| Iowa Mormon Trails Assoc. | Mormon Pioneer NHT | 1978 | n/a | n/a | 750 |
| Oregon-California Trails Assoc. | Oregon NHT | 1978 | 1982 | 1,650 | 56,400 |
| | California NHT | 1992 | 1982 | | |
| | | | | | |
| Ice Age Park & Trail Foundation | Ice Age NST | 1980 | 1958 | 3,100 | 48,190 |
| North Country Trail Association | North Country NST | 1980 | 1981 | 3,000 | 44,000 |
| Overmountain Victory Tr. Assoc. | Overmountain Vict. NHT | 1980 | 1975 | ~ 250 | 8,960 |
| Florida Trail Association | Florida NST | 1983 | 1964 | ~ 6,000 | 69,900 |
| Potomac Heritage Trail Assoc. | Potomac Heritage NST | 1983 | ~ 2000 | ~ 200 | 3,690 |
| Allegheny Trail Alliance | Potomac Heritage NST | 1983 | n/a | 7 orgs. | n/a |
| Nez Perce Trail Foundation | Nez Perce NHT | 1986 | 1991 | ~ 1,000 | 8,250 |
| Santa Fe Trail Association | Santa Fe NHT | 1987 | 1986 | 725 | 47,120 |
| Trail of Tears Association | Trail of Tears NHT | 1987 | 1994 | 600 | 36,600 |
| | | | | | |
| Anza Trail Foundation | J B de Anza NHT | 1990 | (in process) | 20 | |
| Amigos de Anza | J B de Anza NHT | 1990 | ~ 1990 | n/a | 6,790 |
| Anza Trail Coalition of AZ | J B de Anza NHT | 1990 | 1992 | ~ 300 | 2,230 |
| National Pony Express Assoc. | Pony Express NHT | 1992 | 1978 | 800 | 34,270 |
| Pony Express Trail Assoc. | Pony Express NHT | 1992 | n/a | n/a | |
| | | | | | |
| E Mau Na Ala Hele | Ala Kahakai NHT | 2000 | 1979 | 220 | |
| Ala Kahakai Trail Assoc. | Ala Kahakai NHT | 2000 | 2007 | ~ 20 | |
| El Camino Real TA NHT Assoc. | El Camino Real/TA | 2000 | ~ 2005 | ~ 300 | 1,720 |
| Old Spanish Trail Association | Old Spanish NHT | 2002 | 1994 | 480 | 23,720 |
| El Camino Real Tejas NHT Assoc. | El Camino Real/Tejas | 2004 | 2006 | ~ 150 | |
| Friends of the Cpt. John Smith Tr. | Capt. John Smith C. NHT | 2006 | 2008 | 60+ orgs. | |
| | | **Totals** | | **~ 67,400** | **719,820** |

| National Groups | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| American Hiking Society | 1976 | ~ 10,000 | |
| American Trails | 1988 | ~ 200 groups & individuals | |
| Partnership for the National Trails System | 1995 | 30 groups (see above) | |
| Rails-to-Trails Conservancy | 1982 | 110,000 | |

*Benton MacKaye, who originally conceived the Appalachian Trail in 1921, looks out over the Great Smoky mountains, ~ 1934. Photo: Appalachian Trail Conservancy.*

*The Star-Spangled Banner NHT consists largely of water trail routes in the Potomac, Patuxent, and Patapsco Rivers and features Fort McHenry, where the national anthem was written. Photo: GREATgraphics!*

*Alex Davis, Emily Reisinger, Jackie Zinger and Richard Larson admire the view from Chikamin Ridge near Snoqualmie Pass, Washington. Photo: Connie Davis/PCTA from her 2005 PCT hike.*

*Visitors explore a section of* La Jornada del Muerto, *"the Journey of Death", along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, near Soccorro, New Mexico. Photo: NPS.*

*The Pochuck Bridge along the Appalachian NST in northern New Jersey was built by volunteers in several phases funded, in part, by NPS Challenge Cost-Share funds. Photo: NPS.*

*Trail Superintendent Catherine Light guides marchers in Montgomery, Alabama, during the 40th anniversary re-enactment of the Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, following the Selma to Montgomery NHT, March 2005. Photo: NPS.*

*Hikers explore the Ala Kahakai Trail on National Trails Day, 2004, at the black sand beach of Luahinewai. Photo: E Mau Na Ala Hele.*

*Pony Express re-enactors swearing in before their re-ride. Photo: Pat Hearty/ National Pony Express Association.*